

New plan to boost Amateur football

IN A bid to increase the interest in amateur football, the Isthmian League will be open to professional and semi-professional clubs next season, it was decided at the league's council meeting on Friday.

Only six clubs voted against a proposal by Enfield and Bromley to delete the word amateur from the league rules for next season. The full 22 clubs voted on the issue.

The Isthmians hope to attract some of the top Southern League clubs such as Barnet, Romford, Hillingdon Borough and Wealdstone to their ranks, thus improving the standard. This, however would not mean that Wycombe would also have to turn professional.

Wanderers would still retain their amateur status. The idea would be run on a larger scale to the Premier Mid-week Floodlight League, of which Wycombe are members.

Already the Isthmian League have had 31 applications from clubs to join, the majority of them from the Athenian League. Pioneer of the new set-up, Barry East, sees the move as a logical step which would mean the league would be open to the best clubs in the south—whether amateur or professional.

There are also ideas for several cup competitions to sustain inter-

est throughout the season. One proposition from Mr. East is to split the league into two groups of 16 and take the top three from each section. These would play each other in a separate league to determine the league champions.

Another possible alternative would be a further split of the league into four separate divisions of eight with further cup competitions between each sections. But these are just ideas as yet and a definite decision on the final construction of the league has yet to be decided.

The main point of the expansion is to increase interest and revenue. As Wanderers found out last year—a successful enterprise does not necessarily bring financial rewards.

Wycombe lost over £5,000 in overall cup-tie revenue after their early exit from the F.A. Cup at Maidenhead, netting only £1,186 compared with the £6,536 the previous year. Overall the balance sheet showed a loss of £2,822 for the season—and yet they were Isthmian League champions.

One of the many Southern League clubs in a similar predicament was Wealdstone, formerly with the Isthmians, who lost over £7,000.

Some good news for Wanderers came yesterday when Robb Williams' appeal against a booking at Woking this season, was upheld. Wycombe chairman Jack Smethurst was the club's representative at the hearing.

Williams' other booking on October 16 last year against Walthamstow Avenue, expires in two weeks time.

Oxford City have put back their Isthmian League game against Wycombe at their White Home ground to Monday (October 9) instead of the Tuesday as originally scheduled. This is due to a testimonial match between Stoke and Wolves at Oxford United's ground. City feel they could lose some support if they played on the same night.

Three Wycombe players are included in an F.A. Amateur XI which meets the R.A.F. at Uxbridge Stadium next Wednesday (October 11).

Full back Paul Birdseye, midfield man Robb Williams and forward Tony Amos are the Blues' representatives. Mick Chatterton, formerly at Maidenhead and now leading scorer with Slough Town, is also included.